

OLD TIME MIDDIES

They Were Tois of Schoolboys,
Some Not in Their Teens.

TOO YOUNG TO WEAR SWORDS

So the Midgets Were Armed With Dirk Knives Instead—They Were Fighters, Though, Farragut and Porter Being in Battles at the Age of Twelve.

Something more than hundred years ago the midshipman was, indeed, the "midshipmite" that he was popularly called, for he was but a mite of a lad, usually receiving his appointment before he reached his teens. Admirals Farragut and Porter were midshipmen, afloat and in pitched battles, at twelve years of age, and Goldsborough was appointed when only seven years old. Nowadays, however, the midshipman is quite a different person. He cannot enter the Naval academy under fifteen and is therefore when on a regular cruising ship after completing his four years' academic course usually a well developed man, physically mature and athletic and with a trained mind. He is far better equipped mentally than the lieutenants and many of the captains of even seventy years ago.

The old time middies were mere schoolboys. All the warships of any size carried in their regular complements a schoolmaster, whose duty it was to give the lads as liberal an education as possible in the odd periods between strictly professional duties. This rating of schoolmaster was abolished, in fact, only about twenty years ago, but after the establishment of the Naval academy, in 1841, these officials devoted their energies to the sailor apprentices only, the enlisted boys of the forecastle. Even these now obtain their education on shore.

There is a tradition that the three brass buttons the midshipman wears on the sleeve of his full dress coat during his four years at Annapolis originated a century or more ago, when their presence was needed to discourage the youngsters from brushing their noses with their sleeves. This is probably a base slander, modern research indicating that the buttons are relics of the days when there was a cuff flap on the sleeve.

At all events the extreme youth of the midshipmite used to be his most conspicuous characteristic. Instead of the full sized regulation officer's sword that he now carries, he wore a little straight bladed dirk about a foot long. He was to a large extent a messenger for carrying orders about the ship, but he also took charge of boats and commanded men despite his youth. He was frequently placed in charge of a prize captured in war, taking her into port, and not infrequently suppressing mutinies among the prisoners on board. Farragut was a prize master at twelve and got his prize safely in.

The title "midshipmite" is an ancient one. He is above the seamen and the petty officers forward and below the commissioned officers in the wardroom aft; hence "midshipman." There was formerly a higher grade called passed midshipman, but this was abolished before the war between the states. Then the grade was restored, but called midshipman, the former midshipman being designated as a cadet midshipman. In 1882 the title of the latter was changed to naval cadet, which it still remains, and the midshipman were merged with the ensigns. Accordingly the time honored title of midshipman no longer exists officially in the United States navy.

While officially a naval cadet, that young officer is still regarded and often referred to verbally as a midshipman, for he is the same creature as of old as far as his dues go. But by the side of his earlier prototype the twentieth century "middy" is a savant. Trigonometry was about as high up in mathematics as the old timer ever went. The twentieth century lad goes far beyond. He goes through analytical geometry of three dimensions, differential and integral calculus, applied mechanics,

Gunsery a hundred years ago was little more than loading, aiming and firing at short ranges. It now involves metallurgy, theory of the combustion of powder gases, stress and strain, mechanical engineering, manufacture and preservation of complex explosives and other abstruse subjects, in all of which the midshipman of the present day must be proficient.

Midshipmen were conspicuous in all our early wars, notably those with the Barbary States, with the West Indian pirates and with the British in 1812. They were equally conspicuous during our conflicts with the Spanish and Filipinos. Midshipmen, naval cadets, had charge of the extremely hazardous picket duty in the Santiago blockade, close under the Spanish batteries and often under musketry fire from shore. Cadet Powell ran his open launch right into the harbor of Santiago after the Merrimac, remained all night under the menacing guns of the latter batteries and steamed out again under their fire in the morning.—New York Press.

Blood and Fire.

A French editor, anxious for sensations, came into his office and asked his deputy what had happened. "Nothing," he was told, "except that a man's nose had been bleeding in the Place de la Concorde and a chimney is on fire in Montmartre." "Enough," said the other and wrote the placard "Blood and Fire in Paris."

Hurry and cunning are the two apprentices of dispatch and skill, but neither of them ever learns his master's trade.—Colton.

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A BIRD OF LIGHT.

The Arctic Tern Shuns the Night by Flights From Pole to Pole.

It used to be thought that the golden plover bore off the pectoral for length of flight between summer and winter homes, but an article in the National Geographic Magazine awards that distinction to the arctic tern. This bird breeds as far north as it can find anything stable on which to construct its nest. It has been found within seven and a half degrees of the pole itself. And that nest was found surrounded by a wall of newly fallen snow, which the mother bird had carefully scooped out from round her chick.

The tern arrives in the far north about June 15 and leaves again for the south toward the last of August, when the young are able to fly strongly. Two or three months later the birds are to be found skirting the edge of the antarctic continent, 11,000 miles away.

What their track is over that vast space no one yet knows. A few individuals are occasionally seen along the New England or Long Island coast in the fall, but the flocks of thousands and thousands of these gregarious birds which alternate from pole to pole have never been met by any trained observer competent to learn their preferred path and their time schedule. They must travel at least 150 miles each day—apart from their flights in search or in pursuit of food—to carry them within ten or twelve weeks from one end of the world to the other.

The arctic terns enjoy more hours of sunlight than any other creatures on the globe. The sun never sets during their stay at their northern nesting grounds, and during their stay in the south they have two months of continuous sunlight and practical daylight for two months more. The birds have twenty-four hours of daylight for between six and eight months of the year.

FORESAW HER DOOM.

Warnings of Her Tragic Fate That Came to Empress Elizabeth.

In "My Royal Clients" M. Paoli, the famous French detective, writing of the unfortunate Empress Elizabeth of Austria, who was so foully murdered in Geneva in 1898, says that two strange incidents incline one to the belief that the empress received a presentiment of her tragic end.

"On the eve of her departure for Geneva she asked Mr. Barker to read her a few chapters of a book by Marion Crawford, entitled 'Corleone,' in which the author describes the detestable customs of the Sicilian Mafia. While the empress was listening to the harrowing story a raven, attracted by the scent of some fruit which she was eating, came and circled round her. Greatly impressed, she tried to drive it off, but in vain, for it constantly returned, filling the echoes with its mournful croakings. Then she rapidly walked away, for she knew that ravens are harbingers of death when their wings persist in flapping round a living person.

"Again, a lady in waiting told me that on the morning of that day she went into the empress' room, as usual, to ask how she had slept and found her imperial mistress looking pale and sad.

"I have had a strange experience," said Elizabeth. "I was awakened in the middle of the night by the bright moonbeams which filled my room, for the servants had forgotten to draw the blinds. I could see the moon from my bed, and it seemed to have the face of a woman weeping. I don't know if it is a presentiment, but I have an idea I shall meet with misfortune."

And it was a few hours later that Lucchini killed her with a three cornered file clumsily fitted to a wooden handle.

Where the Cold Is Warm.

I have seen sunshine, oh, sunshine as splendid as yours, among my beloved mountains in Switzerland! You know what cold is and what warmth is, but do you know what warm cold is?

Did you ever live a whole winter through glowing because the frost was so warm? Do you know the wonders of blue ice, pink snow and 40 degrees of frost, while the men skate in pajamas and the girls open parasols?

And the splendor of colors in the morning sky; everything in the solar spectrum—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet; at each moment a new combination. And then the sun is up, and the intoxication of it all makes you wonder if you ever lived before.—Dr. Aked in Christian Herald.

Wouldn't Act a Lie.

Theater Manager—You say you object to having real food on the table in the banquet scene. Mr. Greesepayat? Why, the rest of the company are delighted at it!

Mr. Greesepayat—Yes, but my part requires me to rise from the table after a couple of mouthfuls and say: "I cannot eat tonight—a strange dread comes over me. I will seek the quiet of yonder apartment for a time."—McCall's Magazine.

Unfair.

"I suppose it's all right," said Mr. Newrich, "but it doesn't seem fair."

What doesn't seem fair?"

"For Matilda to scold because I want to eat dinner in my shirt sleeves. I don't make any fuss about her party dresses, an' they haven't any sleeves at all."

Both Exempt.

"Do your daughters help their mother with the housework?"

"We wouldn't think of expecting it. Muriel is temperamental, and Zara is intense."—Pittsburgh Post.

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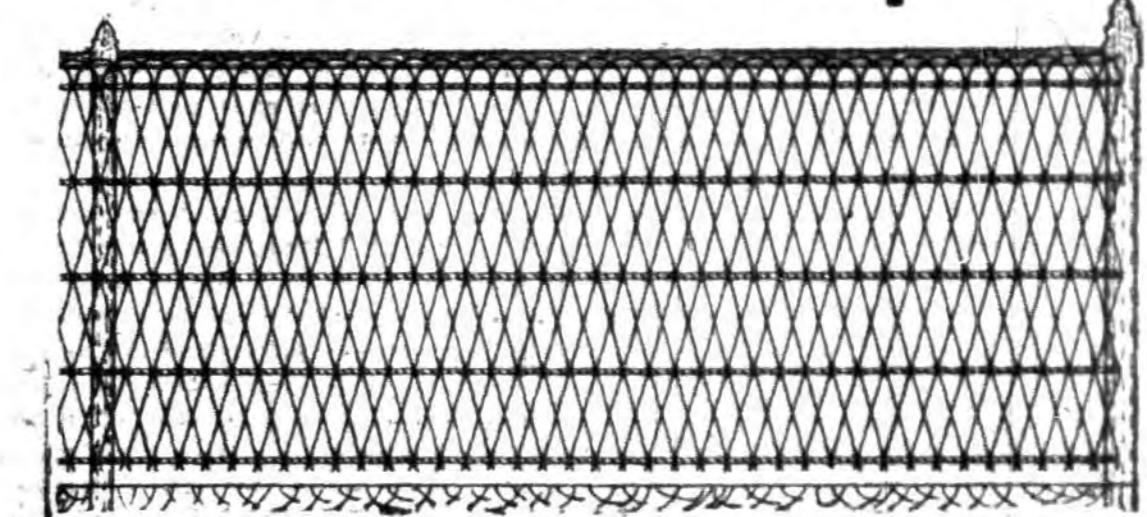
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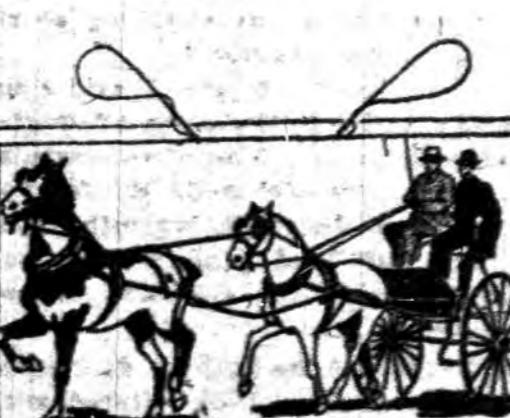
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